

How to Make the Most of a College Fair

With fall in full swing, college admission counselors are criss-crossing the country to introduce students to their institutions. One way they do this is by participating in college fairs.

A college fair gives you an opportunity to chat one-on-one with admission officers from colleges across the country. The largest network of college fairs is sponsored by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). This Fort Lauderdale college fair is sponsored by NACAC.

Here are some tips for making the best use of a college fair::

1. **Make a plan** - Before you head out to the college fair, review the list of schools that are expected to attend the fair. Know in advance if your top choice schools are going to be in attendance.
2. **Be open to learning about new schools** - With over 3,400 colleges and universities in the United States and as many as 350 colleges at the largest fairs in the country, there are bound to be schools that might be the right fit for you that you have not previously considered.
3. **Prepare good questions** - For the schools that you have already identified on your list, ask questions that you only get from conversation. Data points like tuition costs, student body size, and number of majors are easily found on a college website. Ask about the things that aren't. How supportive are faculty in helping students identify graduate programs? What do students do on the weekends? How are students engaged in the local community? Questions like these will not only yield helpful information; they'll also help you stand out.
4. **Use your time well** - Some fairs allow for online pre-registration. Taking advantage of this will provide you with a scannable form that will save you time at each fair table by automatically providing the college with your information. Another great time saver is to bring pre-printed labels with your name, address, phone number, email address, high school name, grade, and potential major. Instead of filling out information cards, you can simply stick your label on the card and move on to your next conversation.
5. **Make a positive impression** - For some colleges, the person standing behind the fair table will also be the person who will visit your high school and even read your application. You want to be memorable...in a positive way. Clean and neat dressing (and comfortable shoes for walking and standing) will convey to the college reps that you are serious about the college search process. Bringing a sturdy totebag or backpack to carry home information will make the experience more pleasant for you and your parents.
6. **Follow-up** - Whenever possible, send a quick thank you email to the college reps that you met at the fair and add a follow-up question that shows you were paying attention to them. Few students take the time to take this extra step and it will make you memorable.